

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PRETOR 00254 131742Z

ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 IOE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 /077 W
-----008505 131744Z /43

O P 131657Z JAN 78 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 0202

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 0254

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORG, SF, WA, GDS

SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: DEMARCHE TO SAG ON PROXIMITY TALKS

REF: (A) STATE 009387, (B) USUN 0113

1. I MADE ARRANGEMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE PRETORIA FIVE TO MEET WITH PIK BOTHA AT 1400 LOCAL TIME JANUARY 13. ONLY TWO AMBASSADORS IN TOWN (SCOTT AND BOWDLER) AND THREE DCM'S ATTENDED THE MEETING. ON SOUTH AFRICAN SIDE WERE BOTHA AND VAN DALSEN. THERE FOLLOWS THE JOINT REPORT OF THE PRETORIA FIVE ON THE MEETING:

BEGIN QUOTE: 1. THE PRETORIA FIVE MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOTHA AND UNDER-SECRETARY VAN DALSEN AT 1400 HOURS TODAY FOR OVER ONE HOUR.

2. FOLLOWING ORAL PRESENTATION BY THE US AMBASSADOR OF THE POINTS WE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO MAKE, BOTHA LAUNCHED INTO A 40 MINUTE APOLOGIA FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S LONG SUFFERANCE IN SUPPORTING ALLEGED DELAY AFTER DELAY AND THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PRETOR 00254 131742Z

THIS HAS PRODUCED IN NAMIBIA ITSELF AS WELL AS WITH THE NATIONAL PARTY AND TO HIM PERSONALLY. HE EMPHASIZED IN PARTICULAR HOW UPSET MR. VORSTER WAS ABOUT THE CONTINUING DELAY WHICH WAS ALREADY IN DANGER OF FRUSTRATING THE ORDERLY MOVEMENT OF NAMIBIA TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE BY THE END OF 1978. IN THIS CONTEXT HE, PERHAPS INADVERTENTLY, LET DROP THAT THE SAG NEEDED A GOVERNMENT TO NEGOTIATE WITH OVER THE FUTURE OF WALVIS BAY. MOREOVER,

THE WHITES WERE BECOMING VERY RESTLESS AND HE HAD TO FACE THE POSSIBLE DANGER OF A ONE-SIDED UDI.

3. HAVING VENTED HIS FRUSTRATION, HE INDICATED THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO TAKE UP WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE CABINET (WHICH MEETS ON 23 JANUARY) OUR INVITATION THAT SOUTH AFRICA PROPOSE A DATE AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE IN FEBRUARY FOR THE PROXIMITY TALKS. HE ACCOMPANIED THIS WITH AN ADMONITION THAT HE WAS NOT VERY OPTIMISTIC THAT SOUTH AFRICA COULD AGREE TO A DATE IN FEBRUARY. AT ONE POINT HE MENTIONED THAT PERHAPS BRAND FOURIE MIGHT GO IN HIS PLACE. AT ANOTHER POINT HE SEEMED TO SUGGEST THAT THE PROXIMITY TALKS BE DISPENSED WITH AND THAT OUR WRITTEN PROPOSALS BE SUBMITTED RIGHT AWAY SO THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT COULD CONSIDER THEM AND MAKE THEIR REPLY WITHOUT GOING TO NEW YORK. IN THE END, HOWEVER, HE CAME BACK TO THE POSITION THAT NO DOORS ARE CLOSED, BUT THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO TALK TO THE PRIME MINISTER BEFORE GIVING US A RESPONSE. WE EXPLAINED THE IMPORTANCE OUR GOVERNMENTS ATTACH TO THE PROXIMITY TALKS AS A MEANS OF BRINGING THE PRINCIPAL INTERESTED PARTIES TOGETHER FOR RAPID CONSULTATION AND DECISION. WE SAID THE PROPOSALS ARE IN THEIR LAST STAGE OF PREPARATION AND, AS HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN NOTED TO VAN DALSEN, THESE WOULD BE FORWARDED TO SOUTH AFRICA AND THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS IN ADVANCE OF THE NEW YORK MEETINGS SO THAT THE SIDES WOULD HAVE AMPLE TIME TO REVIEW THEM. WE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT OUR GOVERNMENTS ARE SEEKING A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE DATE AND ARE NOT BEING DICTATED TO BY SWAPO.

4. COMMENTING ON THE LAST POINT IN OUR PRESENTATION
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PRETOR 00254 131742Z

REGARDING UNILATERAL ACTIONS, BOTHA MADE VERY CLEAR THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WILL ANNOUNCE A DATE FOR ELECTIONS SOME TIME DURING THE NO CONFIDENCE DEBATE, (WHICH IS DUE TO START ON JANUARY 30 AND END ON FEBRUARY 3 OR 4). HE SAID THAT THIS MATTER HAD BEEN DECIDED AND THERE WAS NO WAY THAT IT COULD BE POSTPONED.

5. PRETORIA FIVE COMMENT: IN SPITE OF BOTHA'S EMPHATIC COMPLAINTS ABOUT DELAYS IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND THE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES THESE WOULD CAUSE, WE WERE ENCOURAGED BY THE FACT THAT HE DID NOT CLOSE THE DOOR TO A MEETING IN FEBRUARY PENDING A FURTHER MEETING WITH HIS PRIME MINISTER. END QUOTE.

2. DURING COURSE OF EXPLAINING IMPORTANCE OF PROXIMITY TALKS I MADE THE TWO POINTS (WITH DAVID SCOTT'S SUPPORT) CONTAINED PARA 2 OF REFTEL A. BOTHA'S REACTION WAS THAT SAG'S STANCE THROUGHOUT NEGOTIATIONS SINCE APRIL 1977 WAS SO REASONABLE THAT HE WAS NOT CONCERNED ABOUT DANGERS MENTIONED IN THE SECOND POINT.

3. EMBASSY COMMENT: IMPORTANT ASPECT OF MEETING IS THAT BOTHA DID NOT REJECT POSSIBILITY OF FEBRUARY MEETING OUT OF HAND. HE THREW UP A LOT OF DUST ABOUT SWAPO CALLING THE TUNE, FAILURE OF THE FIVE TO PROVIDE TEXT OF PROPOSALS AND FOLLOW THROUGH WITH INITIAL INVITATION FOR JANUARY 17, SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES THAT

DELAY IS REPORTEDLY CAUSING AMONG DIFFERENT GROUPS IN NAMIBIA,
PRESS LEAKS IN NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON WHICH PUT SA IN BAD LIGHT
AND MAKE NECESSARY FOR HIM TO ANSWER FOR WHICH HE IS THEN
CRITICIZED, AND ACUTE SCHEDULING DIFFICULTIES HE HAS EXPERIENCED
IN HAVING TO CANCEL AND RESCHEDULE APPOINTMENTS AND VISITS. I
HESITATE TO VENTURE WHAT CHANCES ARE FOR A FAVORABLE SAG RESPONSE
ON A FEBRUARY DATE. I SENSE, DESPITE BOTHA'S BLUSTER, THAT
MAINTAINING IMAGE OF REASONABLENESS AND FLEXIBILITY IS STILL
IMPORTANT ALTHOUGH A WANING CONSTRAINT. FROM SOME OF THE REMARKS
HE MADE TODAY, I DETECTED ANNOYANCE THAT HE, A FOREIGN MINISTER,
IS BEING ASKED TO COME TO NEW YORK FOR MEETINGS WITH PERSONS OF
LOWER RANK AND TO SUIT THE CONVENIENCE OF A MAN (NUJOMA) WHO
REPRESENTS NO GOVERNMENT AT ALL. THIS ATTITUDE HAS NOT BEEN
MANIFEST IN PREVIOUS TALKS. BOWDLER
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 PRETOR 00254 131742Z

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DEMARCHE, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PRETOR00254
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780020-0812
Format: TEL
From: PRETORIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780165/aaaaccwu.tel
Line Count: 136
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9d22fce3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION IO
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 9387, 78 USUN NEW YORK 113
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3777433
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NAMIBIA: DEMARCHE TO SAG ON PROXIMITY TALKS
TAGS: PORG, SF, WA, GE
To: STATE USUN NEW YORK
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9d22fce3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014